Reviewing and renewing the BMS

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Thank you Mr. Chair,

Thank you also to Member States for inviting civil society to address you. IANSA has the honour of coordinating civil society participation in the UN small arms process. Our members come from countries severely affected by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons – this year we have colleagues at the BMS from countries including Lebanon, Zambia, Philippines, Trinidad and Tobago, Ghana, Venezuela, DRC, India, Nigeria, Jamaica, South Africa, Kenya, Guatemala, Togo, Fiji and Burkina Faso, among others. We are grateful for the support of Germany and Ireland for making our participation possible.

IANSA members support the POA as a starting point, a minimum baseline to build on.

The focus of this 5th BMS is on specific technical elements of the PoA. We understand why this is required. My colleague Gugu Dube from South Africa will be addressing some of those technical themes.

However, we wish also to remind delegates of the need to also keep our eyes on other dimensions of implementation, that the subjects under examination here are only partial.

The PoA is intended to address the problem of illicit arms in all its aspects. The small arms process should consider implementation of the POA in all its aspects.

Just two years ago member states agreed by consensus that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects continues to sustain conflicts, exacerbate armed violence, undermine respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law, aid terrorism and illegal armed groups and facilitate increasing levels of
transnational organized crime, as well as trafficking in humans, drugs and certain natural resources.

To address those problems, effective stockpile management and tracing methods for weapons and ammunition are essential. But so are other aspects of the POA, including national gun laws and justice system reform.

We live in a changing world. The PoA was designed in 2001 and represented what could be achieved at that time. Things have changed:

- We have the benefit of 13 more years of experience, success and lessons learned.
- We have a large body of evidence-based research; a greater understanding of the human, economic and health costs of armed violence; and of the relationship between controlling weapons, reducing violence and reducing human suffering.
- We have civil society partners around the world with greater knowledge and capacity.
- We have new tools, agreements and processes, including regional conventions, UN Security Council Resolutions on Women Peace and Security, the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, the International Small Arms Control Standards or ISACS, and most recently the ATT.
- New programs and policies in many countries have reduced armed violence.
- The post 2015 development agenda may well – we hope – reflect the need to reduce armed violence in order to foster development.

Despite these advances since 2001:

- We still have excessive and destabilising accumulations of small arms.
- Policy decisions related to small arms and light weapons are still far too often made by male officials from a narrow range of national security-related agencies.
- Hundreds of thousands of people are still being killed each year – about one per minute. This isn’t just a number – these are dearly loved parents, friends, and
children. You will shortly hear from one of our members whose son was killed in the Sandy Hook tragedy in Connecticut in 2012.

Working to prevent the illicit trade in small arms and reduce armed violence is a shared responsibility. Governments have the responsibility to help eliminate the conditions that foster and facilitate violence.

We in civil society are here to hold you accountable. But we are also here to support your efforts – through research, advocacy, information, awareness raising, training, policy analysis and development, program design and evaluation, among other activities.

Countries with capacity have a responsibility to assist other states and civil society. Many of the organisations that have been supporting your efforts are struggling to survive. Funding is needed for programs to prevent and reduce violence, but also address the consequences. My colleague Alex Galvez from Guatemala will speak on that topic.

We believe meetings in the small arms process should discuss what has worked, what didn’t work, and what we should do differently in the next two years.

This evaluation needs to take into account the full life cycle of guns, from demand to production to transfer to possession to disposal and destruction.

Since BMS5 began at 10am on Monday, more than 4000 people – citizens of these member States – have died by small arms and light weapons, and 2-3 times as many have been wounded. Please put reducing this carnage ahead of any other considerations during the remaining hours of BMS5.